Community Briefing Report

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# Background and Objective

A person giving a presentation to an audience

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceFigure 1. TDA's community benefits lead at our engagement event at the Campbell County Public Library in Gillette, Wyoming on November 14, 2024.

The goal of this event was to provide information about the project to the local community while providing an opportunity for the local community to ask questions about the project and how it could impact the local community in the near and long term. As an additional goal, TDA was also interested in soliciting potential interest for the community advisory board (CAB) that we are planning to create during future project phases.

TDA is approaching community engagement as an opportunity to communicate with the Gillette, Wyoming community about the current project while also developing tools that will benefit future carbon capture system development projects as we move towards commercial deployment. Although individual communities are unique and have different goals, values, and needs, we hope that common themes will emerge through expanded outreach, and we hope to learn from our current and future engagement with the goal of improving outreach—especially during early-phase planning. We anticipate that this approach will be beneficial for the current project planned for Dry fork Station. And we hope our current effort will help us to develop tools that enable us to better align future carbon capture system deployments with local goals and needs.

# Event Preparation and Publicity

Based on experience from similar events hosted in Gillette, our community benefits consultants (The School of Energy Resources at the University of Wyoming) suggested the Campbell County Library in Gillette, WY for the location of the community briefing. Using the Campbell County Public Library’s website, we reserved Pioneer Room I for our event. The library offers free meeting room use for community meetings and had the required seating and TV system for displaying presentation slides.

We specifically invited OCED representatives (6), project partners (7), Dry Fork Station (1), union contacts (9), businesses within a 5 mile radius of Dry Fork Station (10), the Campbell County Chamber of Commerce, the Gillette News Record, local schools (3), and trade schools/workforce development centers/community colleges (5). We also sent invitations to an HOA (home owner’s association) and 3 separate communities designated as low-income housing in north Gillette. The Gillette Mayor and Gillette City Council (6) were invited. The University of Wyoming shared the event with their network, and the Wyoming ITC shared the event on LinkedIn. The event was also listed on the library’s calendar.

Cookies were purchased on the day of the event from at a local bakery called Hot Mess Cookies which is located at 316 S Gillette Ave. TDA brought additional IT equipment (laptops, web camera, microphone, and speaker) to facilitate the online portion of the meeting.

# Event Attendance and Participation

During the meeting, we counted roughly 2 dozen total in-person attendees with about a half dozen on-line participants. According to Wikipedia, Gillette, Wyoming has a population of roughly 34,000 (2023 data). This equates to a participation rate of roughly 0.1% of the local population. Based on an informal survey of the audience, we identified that the attendees included community members, local elected officials, project partners (including staff from the Wyoming ITC and Dry Fork Station), TDA employees, and members of the OCED team who were able to join online. Additional online attendees included project partners and union representatives.

During the event we received a number of questions from the attendees. These were not limited to a dedicated Q&A period at the end but were handled as they arose. This might have been challenging for online participants, but it allowed the TDA team to adjust the discussion in real time to focus on the topics of interest. It also allowed us to get more insight into what the community (at least those in attendance) wanted to know about the project. We did not receive any questions through the online meeting chat.

# Feedback

In general, we received positive feedback from the attendees. Those that spoke to us directly seemed supportive of the project and generally excited about new opportunities in the local community. We received one comment that indicated Gillette has a good local workforce with skills in the construction and energy sector that we should be able to tap into for later project phases. Although the focus of this event was primarily on the community benefit front, the majority of the questions were on technical and financial aspects of the project. This included questions about the cost of capture, the scalability of capture (specifically TDA’s technology), how much of the CO2 can be captured (capture efficiency), and where the CO2 will go after it has been captured.

We had an opportunity for further discussion with one of our project partners who attended the in-person event. They indicated that although it wasn’t voiced in the meeting, they were aware of some folks with general skepticism about carbon capture and climate change. Although the science of climate change is outside the scope of this project, it is important to consider that skepticism is present in many communities. Nevertheless, most comments indicated that the demonstration represents a positive for the community in the form of development, work, and opportunity. At least one comment specifically addressed the need to save the coal industry.

# Lessons Learned

Although the event went smoothly, we learned several things that will be useful in planning and executing future events. A brief description of our key takeaways is listed below.

1. The space we reserved at the public library in Gillette was their smallest meeting room. We ended up with more in-person participants than the room could comfortably accommodate. We were fortunate in that the adjacent room (Pioneer II) was unoccupied, and it was possible to expand into the adjacent. For future meetings we should reserve a larger space.
2. For this meeting, we reserved space for the planned meeting duration (1 hour). This was sufficient for the meeting, but we should have reserved the room for at least the hour before and after to allow for setup and cleanup time. As with item 1 above, we were fortunate in that the space was available before and after our reservation; however, that was due to a no-show in the earlier timeslot. For future meetings, we should reserve the space for a much broader time window to make sure that we have adequate preparation time.
3. We provided some cookies from a local bakery as refreshments. These were well received; however, it was recommended that beverages (probably coffee, tea, and water) would be a good addition for future meetings.
4. For future meetings, we should have some sort of microphone for questions from the audience. Alternatively, the speaker could repeat the questions. This wasn’t a major issue for the in-person attendees (due to the relatively small room), but we received feedback that the questions were hard to follow for the on-line participants.
5. For future meetings, we may want to have some sound reinforcement. This could help to make the meeting easier to follow for those with hearing impairment. Although the attendees at this event didn’t seem to require sound reinforcement, that may not be the case in future events. We might also consider other adaptations and accommodations to make the meeting more accessible. This would require additional coordination with the local community to determine what resources are available.
6. For future meetings, we should anticipate technical questions and finance questions. We should prepare some additional slides that address some of these topics in a non-confidential manner. The local community is interested in how the technology works, how physically large the carbon capture system will be, and how much it will cost. Although it didn’t come up directly, we should stress that the demonstration will not impact current ratepayers.
7. For future meetings, we should have the online meeting coordinator engage with the online attendees in real time to make sure they can be active participants in the meeting. This includes not only making sure that they can see/hear the meeting effectively, but also making sure that they are able to ask questions through the online meeting chat/host and fully participate.
8. Pass the signup sheet once guests are seated to ensure the most people sign it as possible.
9. Include a simple explanation of what carbon capture and sequestration are and how different methods of capture vary at the beginning of the presentation.
10. Consider discussing the consequences of carbon capture and prices and the quantities available for other power plant users. Address the question, “Is it true that for a commercial application, 20-30% of the power generated by that plant will need to go into the capture process?”